

May 2015

Emergency Preparedness Pointers

The Post-Disaster Environment Can Be Shocking

Electricity has become an expected resource in everyday life. It is used to keep people connected, heat/cool buildings, educate through media and power vital life support systems in hospitals among its many other uses. While it is used safely as part of everyday life, it can become a dangerous hazard. May is National Electrical Safety Month and time to review the potential dangers electricity can bring to a post-disaster environment.



Power Line Down



Above ground power lines crisscross the landscape. Anything from a major disaster to a simple car crash could cause a power line to fall and energize whatever it touches. Staying safe means being aware of the surroundings and potential dangers. Any downed power line should be treated as if it is energized even if it is not sparking, smoking or making a buzzing sound. Remember these safety rules:

- ⚡ Stay away from the downed line, Idaho Power Company suggests a distance of 100 yards if possible.
- ⚡ Report the incident immediately, in the Treasure Valley call Idaho Power at **(800) 488-6151** or dial **911**.
- ⚡ Do not touch objects that are near or in contact with the line. If someone else touches it, do not touch them because the electricity may flow to you. Call 911 immediately for assistance.
- ⚡ Be especially aware of your surroundings when driving after a damaging storm. If a power line is down on the ground in water, do not drive your car through the water.

If you are in your vehicle and a power line falls on it take the following steps:

- ⚡ Stay inside the vehicle and dial 911 if possible. Warn others to stay away and not touch the vehicle.
- ⚡ If it is no longer safe to stay in the vehicle because of a fire or other life threatening situation, open the door and jump out and away from the vehicle as far as possible. Keep your feet together and land on both feet. With your feet side by side, shuffle away from the area. Do not lift either foot or touch the vehicle and the ground at the same time.

For more power line safety information go to: www.idahopower.com/safety

Don't Be Shocked By The Mess

A disaster event can create chaos inside a structure. There may be a strong desire to immediately begin cleaning things up, but hazards may be waiting within the mess. Floors and objects could be in contact with frayed or broken wires and could be conducting electricity. If there is water in or near electrical circuits or equipment, turn off the power at the main breaker or fuse in the service panel (breaker box). For information on how to locate and shut the power off go to: www.diyadvice.com/diy/electrical/safety/turning-off-power/ Never touch electrical switches or equipment while standing in water. If the floor is wet in front of the service panel, it may not be to safe approach it; call a professional electrician to turn the power off and inspect the electrical system.



Electrical Hot Spot



An earthquake or severe weather event could have an adverse effect on the electrical wiring within a building. Often, people associate an electrical fire only with a sparking wire; but fires can be started by an overheating circuit or wire as well. Electrical fires that start inside walls can smolder for some time before being detected because the smoke is not immediately seen. This may give the fire more time to spread and increase the risk to life and property. It is critical to use all your senses when surveying a damaged building. Be aware of sounds and smells as well as visual clues. Buzzing and crackling sounds or the smell of smoke could indicate the need to shut the power off and evacuate the building. Call 911 and ensure that everyone evacuates outside to the designated meeting area. If you are unable to safely shut the power off at the service panel make sure to inform the first responders when they arrive that the power is still on and that there is a suspected electrical fire.



Ada County Emergency Management
7200 Barrister Drive ♦ Boise, ID. 83704 ♦ (208) 577-4750 ♦ FAX (208) 577-4759
HOME PAGE: www.adcem.org ♦ E-MAIL: pmarusich@adaweb.net

